

1 Corinthians

Chapter 15:12-34

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- **1 Corinthians Outline:**

- Chapter 1 Ungodly divisions result from man's wisdom
- Chapter 2 Carnal man cannot understand our Spiritual God
- Chapter 3 All Christians will have their labors tried by fire
- Chapter 4 Boasting in our leaders puffs up and destroys fellowship
- Chapter 5 Maintain the purity of the Church
- Chapter 6 Do not dispute before the world and do not partake in sexual immorality
- Chapter 7 Principles of marriage
- Chapter 8 The responsibility of liberty
- Chapter 9 Those who preach the Gospel should live from the Gospel
- Chapter 10 You cannot partake of the Lord's table and the table of demons
- Chapter 11 Propriety in corporate worship and communion
- Chapter 12 The body of Christ is unified around a diversity of spiritual gifts
- Chapter 13 Some spiritual gifts are temporary but love never fails
- Chapter 14 The spiritual gifts are to be administered in such a way that the entire body is edified
- Chapter 15 The resurrection of Christ ensures the future resurrection

- **Introduction & Review**

In the previous section, Paul gave us a clear and succinct definition of the gospel. It is this message of the gospel by which we are saved and stand if we continue in the faith to the end. Some in Corinth were teaching that indeed Christ rose from the dead but that there was no resurrection in store for all others. In these portion of chapter 15, Paul leaves no room for doubt; if one event occurred, so too will the other.

Exposition

1 Corinthians 15:12-34

¹² Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.¹⁴ And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.¹⁵ Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up-if in fact the dead do not rise.¹⁶ For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.¹⁷ And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!¹⁸ Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

- Many Christians have turned to these verses to prove the resurrection of Christ. Although this is taught here, it is not the principle purpose of the instruction. Actually, the resurrection of Christ is presumed true and thereby the resurrection of those in Christ is really what is being taught. Notice that some of them "...some among you..." were teaching there was no resurrection from the dead. They may have believed that Christ rose from the dead but they did not believe that everyone else would. Paul's primary point here is that you can't believe one without the other.
- The improper teaching on the resurrection completely undermined the message of the gospel. Note that if we teach that we will not raise from the dead then even Christ has not raised. This somewhat small point has completely nullified the gospel. This demonstrates the importance of doctrinal accuracy. We may begin with a premise which is only slightly off the mark, but as that false doctrine is played out into other facets of the Christian life, the error grows to the magnitude of something that obviates the gospel.
- If Christ did not raise, then neither will we. If we will not raise, then neither did Christ. Although these are two events separated by many years, the one cannot happen without the other. These are dependent events and are not mutually exclusive.
- If Christ did not raise, then all of those who have gone before us and died in their faith are lost with no chance of recovery or

ever meeting again. Although our hope for a reunion does not make the resurrection true, the lack of the resurrection completely empties all hope.

- Notice the implications of what Paul is saying: if the resurrection is false, then we are the losers. We have lived a life of lies with hope in something that did not exist. If there is no resurrection, then the biblical response is hedonism.

20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.²¹ For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.²⁴ Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.²⁵ For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.²⁶ The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.²⁷ For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted.²⁸ Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

- Thankfully, Christ has indeed risen and He is the firstfruits which is an indication of the harvest of believers to rise with Him.
- We can see in verse 22 the importance of translation. In Adam *all* died (each and every without exception). In Christ *all* shall be made alive. It would appear contextually that the "all" in the second part of the verse should mean each and every without exception. So, does this verse teach Universalism? No. We can see that the verses themselves provide the limitation; those who are *in Adam* (which is everybody) versus those who are *in Christ* (true believers).
- There is a tremendously important chronology and progression in these verses. First Christ raises from the dead. Then those who are in Him will rise. Then comes the end when a number of things happen. Christ delivers the kingdom to the Father, all earthly rule is brought to an end as well as Christ's. Once all of the enemies are brought to submission to the kingdom of Christ, they have been made His footstool. Finally the last enemy which will be destroyed is death. By our resurrection from the dead, death will have no further jurisdiction on anybody. Death itself is destroyed.
- The kingdom of Christ began at His ascension to the right hand of the Father. Notice in verse 25 that Paul says He must reign until He subdues His enemies. He ascended and rules with all power and authority having been given to Him. Christ does not return to *establish* His kingdom, rather, He returns to consummate it. After the destruction of all of His enemies (which includes the final judgment) Christ's last enemy, death, is eliminated never to have affect again. What a joyful message for the Saints of God and bone-chilling for those who will spend eternity in torment without even the "hope" of dying.

29 Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?³⁰ And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour?³¹ I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.³² If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"³³ Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."³⁴ Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

- Verse 29 has baffled scholars for centuries. There are many interpretations attempting to understand and explain what this practice was that Paul alluded to. We do know that nowhere else in the Scriptures is the practice taught on-let alone commanded. Nor do we have any indication at all that such a practice would be efficacious in salvation. The simplest understanding might be that there were those who felt compelled to be baptized for those who died before they were able to be baptized. In this theory, the person being baptized was doing so simply to honor the dead but baptismal regeneration was not in view here.

Others have surmised that the baptism was really the word "washing" which corresponded to the Hebrew ceremonial rule of cleansing oneself after touching a dead person. Nevertheless, the verse is very difficult to understand.

- Paul's rhetorical questions can be summarized by asking why someone would allow themselves to be put in harms way every day for something that was false. The answer is, they wouldn't.
- In this last verse, Paul rebukes the Corinthians for having kept company with people who denied the resurrection. In addition, it also appears that some of them began to believe their teaching which completely undermined the gospel.